CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	LUL #3073246, Expansion of an existing above ground valve site from 0.12 acres to 0.52 acres
Proposed Implementation Date:	Spring 2013
Proponent:	Northwestern Corp.d/b/a Northwestern Energy, 40 East Broadway St., Butte, MT 59701
Location:	SW4SW4 (Lot 4), Section 31, T37N, R4W
County:	Toole
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Northwestern Energy has requested to expand an existing above ground valve site from 0.12 acres to 0.52 acres. The existing above ground valve site is covered under Right of Way Deed #D-10562A. Northwestern Energy has requested a LUL in order to allow for this valve site to be expanded and then they will apply for an easement amendment once the project has been completed. The proposed construction area is next to the existing valve site in an area that has been previously disturbed in that site's construction.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Northwestern Energy-Proponent
DNRC-Surface Owner
Kelly Hartwell-Surface Lessee, Lease #7714

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed to complete this project.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Deny Northwestern Energy permission to expand an existing above ground valve site from 0.12 acres to 0.52 acres.

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Grant Northwestern Energy permission to expand an existing above ground valve site from 0.12 acres to 0.52 acres.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

Soils at the proposed project site are silty in texture. The topography is flat to gently rolling where the existing valve site will be expanded. This soil and slopes are generally suitable for the expansion of the existing valve site. Equipment will cause localized areas of soil compaction and will disturb the soil were the valve site is placed. Reclamation requirements are to compact and level the trench scar created in the installation of the five retrofitted valve assemblies, installation of the pig launcher/receivers, and addition of the new fence around the site. Then seed the impacted area with the existing grass types and seeding rates that are listed in item 7 of this assessment. Cumulative impacts on soil resources are not expected as the use of an excavator will minimize the surface disturbance caused by the construction project.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

There are numerous water rights associated with this tract; however none are located in the proposed construction area. The expansion of the existing above ground valve site will improve the Cobb storage system by making the whole system a step closer to the goal of pigging while in-service. Other water quality and/or quantity issues will not be impacted by the proposed action.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

The proposed action will not impact the air quality.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

Vegetation will be minimally impacted as approximately 0.40 acres is permanently disturbed to expand an existing above ground valve site. The vegetation consists primarily of native species. Noxious and annual weeds within the proposed construction areas are a concern, but this concern will be mitigated as the applicants are responsible for controlling weeds within the construction areas. Cumulative impacts on the vegetative resources are not expected as the proposed construction areas will be reclaimed and reseeded. The reseeding mixture will consist of a grass seed mixture of 35% Western Wheatgrass, 35% Slender Wheatgrass, 15% Bluebunch Wheatgrass, 10% Green Needle grass, and 5% Lewis blue flax. If drilled the rate will be 8#/acre and if broadcast the rate will be doubled.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted and there were no plant species of concern noted or potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

The area is not considered critical wildlife habitat. However, this tract provides habitat for a variety of big game species (mule deer, whitetail deer, and pronghorn antelope), predators (coyote, fox, and badger), upland game birds (sharp tail grouse, Hungarian partridge), other non-game mammals, raptors and various songbirds. The proposal does not include any land use change which would yield changes to the wildlife habitat. The proposed action will not impact wildlife forage, cover, or traveling corridors. Nor will this action change the juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover. Wildlife usage is expected to return to "normal" (pre-action usage) following the project's completion. The proposed action will not have long-term negative effects on existing wildlife species and/or wildlife habitat.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

There are no threatened or endangered species, sensitive habitat types, or other species of special concern associated with the proposed project area. At this time, no known unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources have been identified within the proposed project area.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted for T37N, R4W: There were three species of concern and two potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey: Birds-Golden Eagle and Ferruginous Hawk. Mammals-Hoary Bat. Fish-Brook Stickleback and Brassy Minnow. This particular tract of native rangeland does not contain many, if any of these species. If any are present, they will be dispersed into the surrounding permanent cover and return to the project area once it is completed.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

No historical, archaeological, or paleontological resources were identified in the proposed project area. Minimal site leveling and graveling will occur during the proposed project, so no cultural resources will be impacted by the proposed LUL #3073246.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

The state land does not provide any unique scenic qualities not also provided on adjacent private lands. The proposed LUL #3073246 will consist of an expansion of an existing valve site, so there would be no change to the aesthetics in either alternative.

No direct or cumulative effects to aesthetics are anticipated.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

The demand on environmental resources such as land, water, air, or energy will not be affected by the proposed action. The proposed action will not consume resources that are limited in the area. There are no other projects in the area that will affect the proposed project.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

There are no other projects or plans being considered on the tract listed on this EA.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:
Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

The proposed project will not change human safety in the area.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:
Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

The results of this project will not affect the industrial, commercial, or agricultural activities or production in the area.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:
Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

This project will not create any new jobs, as the project will be completed in house by the proponent.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:
Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

The proposed action will add to the tax revenue.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:
Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

This project is of a small scale and being funded by Northwestern Energy. There will be no excessive stress placed of the existing infrastructure of the area.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:
List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

The proposed action is in compliance with State and County laws. No other management plans are in effect for the area.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:
Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

This proposed project is an expansion of an existing valve site. The tract is not legally accessible and the proposed action is not expected to impact general recreational and wilderness activities on this state tract.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:
Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing

The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments.

No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The proposed action will not impact the cultural uniqueness or diversity of the area.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

This project will benefit the school trust in terms of a fee generated from LUL #3073246 and from the future easement. The fee will be $25.00 for the LUL application fee and $1,000.00 for the one year term of the license for a total of $1,025.00. The easement will affect an estimated 0.40 acres and Northwestern Energy will be charged fair market value for the amendment of their existing easement. Cumulative impacts are not likely as the area is only used for grazing and the expansion of the existing valve site will not affect the long-term viability of grazing on the tract.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:** Tony Nickol	**Date:** April 22, 2013
	Title: Land Use Specialist, Conrad Unit, Central Land Office	

V. FINDINGS

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Issue the Land Use License.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The LUL will allow for immediate construction of needed valve site improvements. The applicant will follow up with an as-built survey and an easement amendment to include these improvements. No significant impacts are expected.

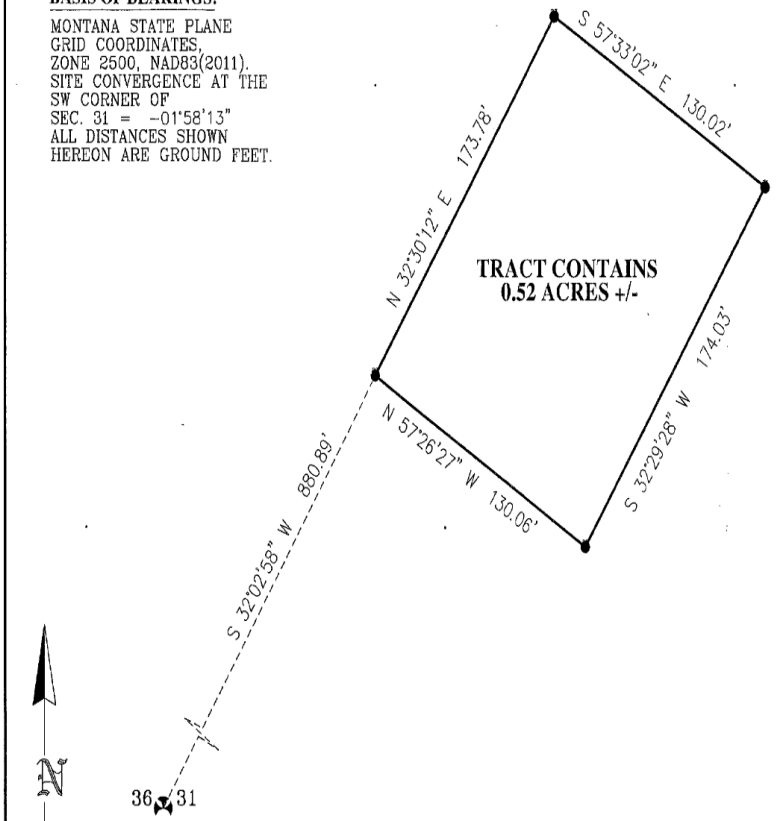
27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ]	EIS	[ ]	More Detailed EA	[X]	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Erik Eneboe
	Title:	Conrad Unit Manger, CLO, DNRC
Signature: 		**Date**: April 22, 2013

BASIS OF BEARINGS:

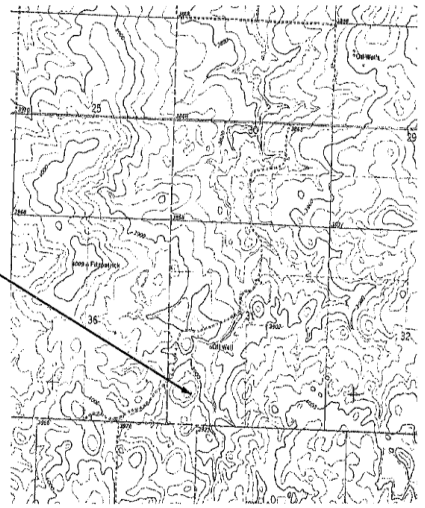
MONTANA STATE PLANE
GRID COORDINATES,
ZONE 2500, NAD83(2011).
SITE CONVERGENCE AT THE
SW CORNER OF
SEC. 31 = -01°58'13"
ALL DISTANCES SHOWN
HEREON ARE GROUND FEET.



LEGAL DESCRIPTION: 16" COBB LOOP LINE

A TRACT OF LAND LOCATED IN THE SW CORNER OF SECTION 31, T. 37 N., R. 4 W., P.M. OF MONTANA, TOOLE COUNTY; DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: BEGINNING AT A POINT FROM WHICH THE SOUTHWEST CORNER SAID SECTION 31 BEARS S 32°02'58" W, 880.89 FEET AS SHOWN ON CCR# 211601; THENCE N 32°30'12" E, 173.78 FEET; THENCE S 57°33'02" E, 130.02' FEET; THENCE S 32°29'28" W, 174.03 FEET; THENCE N 57°26'27" W, 130.06' FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. THE TRACT OF LAND CONTAINS 0.52 ACRES MORE OR LESS.

VICINITY MAP
N.T.S.



1/4	SEC.	T.	R.
	31	37N	4W

P.M. MONTANA,
TOOLE COUNTY

LEGEND

- FOUND STANDARD CORNER SEC 31&36 PER CCR# 211601
- SET ⅝" REBAR W/OPC NWE - CONTROL

50 0 50
1 INCH = 50 FEET

MONTANA
WILLIAM D. WEBER JR. 15255LS
LICENSED LAND SURVEYOR

LAND SURVEYOR	4/2/13
DEPT. MGR.	
DIRECTOR	
DESIGNED	
DRAWN	

NorthWestern Energy

ADDITIONAL EASEMENT REQUIRED FOR THE 16' COBB LOOP LINE CROSSING STATE LANDS

SIZE	DWG. NO.	
CSF=0.99976355 @ PT"60	DIV. NO.	SHT 1 OF 1

MicroStation 11" X 17"